



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

EVOLUTION AND THE OTHER WORLD<sup>1</sup>

PAUL ELMER MORE

PRINCETON, N.J.

What special students of so-called psychic phenomena will think of Mr. Henry Holt's two generous volumes I do not know, but to me, and no doubt to many like me, they are quite the most important and significant, as they are the most entertaining, exposition of the subject. This is indeed something more than a dead book; it is a life—as it were the voice of a friend confiding to us through the hours of a long winter night the lessons, still mingled with hesitations and questions, of his ripe experience. The publicity of high spirits may abound; but there are pages also which will reveal their full meaning only to those who know the author as a friend in the literal sense of the word, passages, for those who understand, of almost sacred privacy. So, for instance, the minute account of the spectacle unfolding at sunrise to the eyes of the watcher at the author's summer home has its place and weight for all readers as an argument that, as these lovely things are far beyond "our ancestors' universe of darkness and silence," so there may be infinite ranges of perception still to be discovered by mankind; but to one who has entered that hospitable "gate, open to all who care to come," and with the kindly guidance of his host has seen the sunlight falling from mountain top to valley and from valley to lake, the printed words will be something more than the speech of a book to its unseen audience. These

<sup>1</sup> On the Cosmic Relations, 2 vols. Henry Holt. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914. Vol. I, pp. xii, 512. Vol. II, pp. 477. \$5.00.

matters I should like to dwell on for their pleasantness and their wisdom; but, like a bad talker, I must use all my time in contradiction. For I need not defer saying that Mr. Holt's work seems to me to consist of two elements strangely compounded. Besides the appealing sagacity of the man of the world, inquisitive, sceptical of dogma, tolerant of all things except impertinence, resting finally in balance and measure—besides this sagacity of experience to which I bow, there is also in the book a philosophy of a more formal sort, to which, from the deepest knowledge of my heart, I am bound to demur.

Mr. Holt is avowedly of the school of "Lyell, Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and their friends," who swept away "the flood of associations on which the old faiths depended"; he is a Spencerian *à outrance*. Such a state of mind might be set down as merely belated; but Mr. Holt is anything rather than tardy in his views. My quarrel with him is because, while adhering to the letter of evolution in its strict mechanical form, he would open his mind to the flood of spiritual associations with no sense of the incongruity of such a position. I do not mean to imply that there is anything singular in this procedure, unless it be in the peculiar frankness and honesty of Mr. Holt's ideas. On the contrary, however individual some of his conclusions may appear, he has been borne onward on one of the great tides of the intellect. In the exaltation and lust of conquest that came with the Victorian demonstration of evolution, men's heads were a little turned, and whatever reservations they might make in deference to the Unknowable and the outlying realms of mystery, they were really and pugnaciously convinced that here was the word of truth which should silence the riddling questions of man's soul, as certainly as the Copernican system had led to the untangling of the orbits of the planets. The

comparison of Darwin or Spencer with Copernicus became in fact one of the commonplaces of the wise and the unwise.

But this assurance of science was bought at a terrible price. It meant that every appearance of spontaneity in the universe must be subdued to a law of inflexible regularity, and that the soul of man was held to be no more than a momentary centre of molecular force in the vast abyss of matter. Naturally, the imagination of endless space and of the infinite mechanism of time, when the first enthusiasm of assertion calmed down, seemed to the human spirit a chill substitute for its intuitions of independent existence. In many thoughtful minds it even awoke a kind of horror, and the supreme word of Spencer himself, the codicil, so to speak, to his evolutionary testament, is an ever memorable confession of that feeling:

“The thought of this blank form of existence which, explored in all directions as far as imagination can reach, has, beyond that, an unexplored region compared with which the part which imagination has traversed is but infinitesimal—the thought of a Space compared with which our immeasurable sidereal system dwindles to a point, is a thought too overwhelming to be dwelt upon. Of late years the consciousness that without origin or cause infinite Space has ever existed and must ever exist, produces in me a feeling from which I shrink.”

Now it is nothing to our purpose here to say that the notion of infinite space or of any cosmic mechanism is as purely a piece of self-engendering logic as was Anselm’s or any other Schoolman’s ontological proof of the being of God. The point is that the hearts of men are never very brave before the truth, or what they deem the truth, when their own deeper desires are thwarted. “The chief component of mind,” as Spencer observes, “is feeling,” and it is an “enormous error” to suppose that reason, whether right or wrong, will long endure

the attack of our emotions. And so the revulsion from the cruder dogmas of Victorian materialism has been swift and sure. In many ways, whether in open rebellion against science or ostentatiously under its banner, men have turned their eyes once more to

“that true world within the world we see,  
Whereof our world is but the bounding shore”—

calling it “true,” perhaps, because faith is greater than perception.

Now, outrageous as such a statement may sound, I confess that the conversion of the professional student of science, as, for example, that of Sir Oliver Lodge, has little meaning for me; the very character of his work in investigation seems to have a restricting effect on his mind, so that his sense of the relative value of evidence in other than his own narrow field is likely to be feeble or distorted. But there is deep meaning in the fact that a wary man of the world, who has been imbued with the mechanical theorems of evolution, should yet find this philosophy inadequate to his inner life, and should devote the dearly purchased leisure of his later years to the study of phenomena which, if genuine, must break asunder all the links of Huxley’s causal chain and shatter into bits the steadfast cosmic machine of Spencer. For what have cause or calculation to do there where Mr. Holt would take us, even “beyond the region of congruities”? If any one paragraph may be selected as giving the central motive of Mr. Holt’s book, it is, I take it, this:

“Certain it is that without an abiding consciousness that the known mass of phenomena is not all, and that behind them is a cause transcending our imaginations, life loses some of its best emotions, the imagination grows arid, and the moral impulses shrink. While what we know, and the increasing of it, can more than occupy all our working powers, they work all the better for an occasional dream of greater and less troubled things.”

These two bulky volumes, in fact, are essentially the confession of a strong inquisitive mind seeking, under compulsion, to reach some assurance in that "dream of greater and less troubled things." Mr. Holt is one of those who admit that wisdom has come to them by way of sudden conversion. The first warning fell when he was still a young man: "It came," he says, "with the blaze of light, but the light was from the natural sunset which, however, seemed that evening not confined to the far-off clouds, but to pervade the whole atmosphere and all other things, including me, and to be pervaded by energy and mind and sympathy." This, if I interpret his story correctly, was of the preliminary and general sort not unknown in conversions of the more orthodox kind, and needed to be fixed and directed by a later experience. He was turned finally to the new way by a figure and admonition, as he firmly believes, from the other world—an epiphany so dear that he can only hint at it in pious reticence. He had already seen a little of what the commoner sort of mediums can do in furniture-smashing and mind-reading, but now he who—I cannot forbear the gentle reproach—can find small time for Plato, is impelled to give year upon year to the forty-one volumes of the *Proceedings and Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*. It is not strange that, after this long confinement and the completion of his great work, his "desire to get back to the studies of our usual life is like the desire to get from the fog into the sunlight"; but to some of us his report from that realm of fog is strange indeed, passing strange.

A considerable part of his book consists of extracts from the publications of the S. P. R., supplemented by a few hitherto unprinted documents and furnished with a running comment. For the form in which this material is given us we are bound to be grateful. The selection includes matter of a later date than that in

the *Human Personality* of Mr. Frederic Myers, and is constructed in such a spirit of freedom and fairness as to justify the reader in feeling that he would gain little by wading through the enormous mass of the sources. Nor is Mr. Holt's tone repellently dogmatic. He admits that he himself is still groping in these obscure regions, and he does not hesitate to point out the paradoxical and often contradictory nature of the evidence. The rôle of fraud and collusion in the manifestations he does reject as insignificant and impertinent; and in this most of us are ready to follow him. No doubt there has been a vast amount of deliberate deception in the table-turning and other so-called mediumistic phenomena, but the residue of facts which cannot be accounted for by the ordinary faculties of man is large and presses for explanation. What shall we do with them?

Now a complete Spencerian, and indeed any one who marches under the exclusive flag of science, is bound to hold that these phenomena have their proper place in the scheme of evolution, and so Mr. Holt is at great pains to connect them with the development of man's perceptive powers. I have referred to his eloquent account of the joy of our larger contact with the visible world as compared with the dark and limited horizon of the amoeba, from whom man is supposed to be descended. And so analogy suggests to him, as it has suggested to others, that our sensitiveness to "super-usual" phenomena is but the beginning of a new faculty, comparable to the spot on the tegument of the primitive organisms which reacted to a ray of light, and that in time this faculty will be trained to respond to the fulness of the spiritual world as the human eye has grown to embrace the wonders of material vision. The dimness and confusion of psychic perception now are due to our inexperience, and all our knowledge of evolution warrants the hope

that some day our children's children shall see with a wide-open inner eye, and shall be able *veras audire et reddere voces*.

Meanwhile all is not darkness. Beyond the incidents of telepathy and telekinesis, which many of the most sceptical of us are beginning to accept, there are those—not the sentimentalists of the old sort, but highly educated men and women—who believe that we already have abundant evidence of true communication with denizens of the other world. Mr. Holt wavers a little when he comes to theorize on these things, but at bottom his conviction is pretty firm that in some way, sometimes obscurely and deceptively, sometimes clearly and commandingly, the dead speak to us through what material mediums they can employ. The “subliminal self” he rejects as a meaningless fiction. In its place he assumes what he calls the Cosmic Soul—the great reservoir from which our mind or spirit emanates, gathers strength and personality by the discipline of life, and then in due time returns to its source, remaining at once a part of the whole and a separate individuality. I can best set forth his views of this delicate matter by quoting three short paragraphs from different parts of the book:

“... Indications of a consciousness aware of everything that is going on or has gone on, at least within the sphere of its activity, and which includes and reaches far outside of our activity and our knowledge. All individual consciousnesses seem to be, in some mysterious way, not only themselves, but part of that universal consciousness; for we get from it not only wondrous dream-images of all kinds, but mysterious impressions from individual consciousnesses other than our own, which with our own are part of it.”

“But though perhaps we flow back into this constantly increasing aggregate of mind—the Cosmic Soul—it seems much more obviously to flow into us, at times and in degrees that vary enormously, as we vary. Into the least sensitive or receptive it does not go perceptibly beyond the ordinary psychoses of daily life; into others it seems to penetrate in ways to which we hardly know how to assign limits.



Will it not presumably, as evolution goes on, flow more and more into all of us?"

"It looks too as if these possibilities might be the supreme justification for the evolution of the universe. There may be justification enough in birds and flowers, in the play of lambs and children, in sex, in love, in the maternity around which so much of the world's worship has centred, in knowledge, in wisdom, even as they have been ordinarily understood; but a new significance, a new joy, a new glory over and beyond them all sometimes seems to have been lately promised by that as yet dim conception of the Cosmic Soul."

In my small reading in this field I know of no other expression so clear and persuasive of the "dream of greater and less troubled things" which may come to a strong mind from spiritualism. Nothing certainly in Frederic Myers's elegant and learned exposition of the subject has ever given me the same shock, so to speak, of veracious experience. Now in one way there is nothing new in these conclusions. It would be hard to distinguish between this Cosmic Soul and that all-embracing Mind with which the Stoic Emperor sought to think in common, as we breathe with the circumambient air (*μηκέτι μόνον συμπνεῖν τῷ περιέχοντι ἄερι, ἀλλ' ἤδη καὶ συμφρονεῖν τῷ περιέχοντι πάντα νοεῖν*); hard to see how it differs essentially from the *anima mundi* of certain mediæval philosophers, or from the Deity of certain half-panteistic divines—and indeed Mr. Holt does not shrink from calling it by the sacred name of God. Even the attempt to furnish such a belief with a scientific sanction is not altogether unknown, for the Stoic creed was the direct outgrowth of an age of science; but the peculiar kind of confirmation which the devotees of psychical research claim for their hopes from the analogies of evolution is emphatically a new thing. I suspect that the adherence of many "tough-minded" men (as William James would call them), so different from the credulity of the earlier spiritualists, is due in large measure to the illusion of these analogies.

Illusion, I say, for I cannot see one particle of justification for these claims. The publications of the S. P. R. are sufficient evidence that psychic phenomena in these latter years have received a kind of study unknown in the past, and they have manifestly been dislocated into what may seem to be the region of science by the imposition of a classification decked out with the proper furnishing of Greek names. But in essential matters I cannot see the slightest proof of advance in our communication with the other world since the remotest records of history. I can only hint at one or two reasons for my belief, and leave the argument to the reader to fill out as he may. Mr. Holt gives several cases of supposed levitation, but is rather doubtful of the facts. Well, if one will turn to the ancient religious books of India, he will find that the power of raising the body into the air is universally taken for granted as an every-day event. A saint who could not practise levitation was a mere novice in the higher life. Did the holy men of India really float before the eyes of innumerable observers in this uncanny fashion, and did some of the mediæval mystics enjoy the same sort of privilege? I do not know; but I am sure that the evidence for the tradition is as good as any of the tales accepted by the S. P. R. Again, the trance life was developed by the ancient Buddhists, and its various stages were analyzed by them with an apparatus of scientific terminology which makes the modern séance seem in comparison the amusement of a spiritual kindergarten. So too the knowledge of the other world obtained by these reputable gentlemen was incomparably superior in scope and precision to any light of recent years. It would be idle to refer to the records of similar powers through the classical and middle ages and in later times, without filling these pages with examples. Those who are looking for entertainment from this subject may be directed to Defoe's *Duncan Campbell*, where,

by the way, they will learn that when English was still a living speech, telepathy was merely "a sympathy with souls." And as there is no warrant for asserting any progress in these psychic phenomena, so the hope that some faculty of the soul, now in its primitive state, will develop to wondrous capabilities, is a pure assumption, and cannot be confirmed by analogy with physical evolution. Myers virtually conceded this when he said that the "actual possession and control of human organisms by departed spirits . . . carries us back to the most outrageously savage group among the superstitions of the early world." Yet with that sublime indifference to consistency which is the universal mark of pseudo-science, he is ready almost in the same breath to base the certainty of religious faith on our presumed evolution in this direction: "Assuredly this deepening response of man's spirit to the Cosmos deepening round him must be affected by all the signals which now are glimmering out of night to tell him of his inmost nature and his endless fate. Who can think that either Science or Revelation has spoken as yet more than a first half-comprehended word? But if in truth souls departed call to us, it is to them that we shall listen most of all." Alas for the blind hopes and the dark minds of men! How long ago the great evolutionary poet of Rome uttered those words, and these:

"Denique si vocem rerum natura repente  
mittat et hoc alicui nostrum sic increpet ipsa,  
'quid tibi tanto operest, mortalis, quod nimis aegris  
luctibus indulges? quid mortem congemis ac fles?'"

That was, and still shall be, the only true consolation, not ignoble indeed, from Nature's voice in the law of evolution. No, these phenomena that transcend the scheme of calculable physical forces, wherever they belong, do not fall within the province of science, and

Huxley, though he may have gone too far in denouncing them as gross imposture, was entirely justified as the apostle of evolution in declaring that, even if proved true, they would have no interest for him.

Nor, with the best will in the world, can I see that in themselves they offer any hope of less troubled things in the future. After balancing the evidence with open mind I am bound to say that, in my judgment, it seems to weigh strongly, overwhelmingly, against the hypothesis of communication with the dead. The bulk of the supposed messages from spiritual "controls" are palpably within the natural powers of the medium. Of the few that show knowledge beyond the reach of the medium the majority are easily explained by chance or telepathy, and those that seem to evade this kind of explanation are so extremely rare as scarcely to count at all against the mass of negative arguments; the only safe logic in these exceptional cases is to assume that we are ignorant of some of the circumstances. It is obviously impossible within the compass of an essay to marshal the negative arguments, but one or two of them may be indicated.

In the first place, then, the prearranged tests of a crucial character have failed. "Myers shows lack of memory of languages," says Mr. Holt, "but apparently only where his medium doesn't know them; but there's that envelope which he left with Sir Oliver Lodge for the express purpose of giving its contents, and he gave something else! It seems a hopeless muddle of contradictions." I should rather call it a very clear argument. The muddle of contradictions is in the stories which the spirits of wise men and women are believed to send us of life beyond the grave. They say one thing today and the very opposite thing tomorrow. When they do not talk nonsense, they commonly talk platitudes. So far as my reading goes, there has never come

one single word about the future state, though it be a George Eliot or a Walter Scott who speaks, which goes beyond the imagination of a commonplace or vulgar medium, though, as a matter of fact, some of the unprofessional mediums are refined, intelligent people, when their minds are awake. This, for instance, is the kind of education that follows us into the other world (George Eliot *loquitur*):

“I being fond, very fond of writers of ancient history, etc., felt a strong desire to see Dante, Aristotle, and several others; Shakespeare, if such a spirit existed. As I stood thinking of him, a spirit instantly appeared, who speaking said, ‘I am Bacon.’ . . . As Bacon neared me, he began to speak, and quoted to me the following words, ‘You have questioned my reality. Question it no more. I am Shakespeare.’”

Nor can I at all follow Mr. Holt in finding an argument for direct possession in the dramatic power of a Mrs. Piper—“more exact and comprehensive,” he thinks, “(not more poetic, of course) than that of Shakespeare or Sophocles.” I simply cannot see that this power of speaking for various persons surpasses what should be expected from such a medium in the trance state; there seems to me nothing at all miraculous or “super-usual” in it.

Even if it were left a matter of taste, and as such *non disputandum*, to me belief in the genuineness of these “controls” would simply add a new terror to death. Shall there be no escape in this broad universe from folly and ignorance? The believers apologize for the prevalence of these qualities by appealing to the difficulty of establishing communication between those in the spirit and those in the body. I cannot see that the defence applies. If the communication is established, as they say it is, why should it be harder to give us a bit of real information about the new life than to utter contradictory platitudes? Charles Eliot Norton once had a

sitting with Mrs. Piper in the home of William James, and this was the conclusion of his report: "As to the origin of many of the phantasmagorias of her trance dreams, I formed a very distinct opinion, but many experiments would be required to test its correctness, *and these I shall never make.*" I hold Mr. Norton's taste to be a deeper wisdom than the unregulated "open-mindedness" of his friend. When the last balance is made up, I even suspect that Mr. James will have been found among the disintegrating and deteriorating forces of the age.

For in its sum this movement, to which Mr. James lent the prestige of his great name, seems to me to lie in a backward direction towards disintegration. As it is not science, so it is not religion. Here is the significant fact. The physical phenomena produced by mediums and "sensitives" are invariably, whether genuine or fraudulent, the work of disorganization and destruction. I have yet to hear of anything constructed or brought into order by the forces of telekinesis, or what not; but I hear of tables foolishly rising into the air, of bells inanely ringing, of guitars smashed, and furniture generally hurled about the room. The literature of the subject has a capital name for the perpetrator of these absurd freaks—the Poltergeist, or demon of confusion; and certainly if there is any god of this world, it is he. Nor does his sway end with material objects, but so far as there is anything super-normal in the spiritual phenomena, here too his mischievous will would seem to be displayed. I do not mean by this that the human soul is chained to a dull mechanic exercise; the word "normal" is not necessarily synonymous with creeping routine. It is possible that in the dream-state there may come to the liberated soul intimations and visions that in one sense quite surpass its normal range, and in deep slumber we may enjoy a foretaste

of a divine repose that is by no means the same as sluggish death. I have gone far enough in the old Hindu mysticism to hold my mind open to such beliefs without waiting for confirmation from the reports of modern instances. And these images of the beloved dead that appear to men privately and in secret utter warnings and exhortations of a kind

“to shake our dispositions

With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls”—

these, though they be called the creation of fantasy, may yet speak from the deeper wisdom of the heart, piercing with magic voice through the crust of diurnal circumstance. Nevertheless, even here is danger. The critic of literature is bound to protest against identifying the inspiration of genius too closely with the automatic creations of the dream state. That leads straight to the super-romantic exaltation of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* as the supreme type of poetry, and to a belittlement of the higher organizing imagination and of the reflective use of experience in art. Of this sort of criticism we have seen vastly too much for a hundred years and more. In like manner we know how the ready hearkening to “airy tongues that syllable men's names” has in the past brought many a sturdy mind to credulity and dilapidation. These things we may say with no lack of deference to those admired names that have thought, and still think, otherwise.

If I might add another conjecture to the many that have been thrown out to explain these mysteries, I should say that there may well exist a great reservoir of free mental and spiritual energy out of which some selective agency within us has drawn together the stuff of its being and created what we call our personality, and that in the same way the universe has its centripetal will—a deity, a God, men name it—which shapes about itself

a sphere of order and harmony and divine purpose, amid the purposeless fluctuations of what Plato called *ἀνάγκη*, fate. If this were so, then the strangely haphazard and insignificant communications that reach the mind in the trance state, would be no divine intimations passing between our soul and the Cosmic Soul, or World Soul, properly speaking, but would be the result of suspending the inhibitive force of personality and opening the soul to the influx of those uncontrolled and unassimilated influences which stray, as it were, from the fringe and loose ends of the unseen realm. Glimpses of beauty may come to the soul by chance in those moments, and miraculous divinations from the ragged edge of things, but the outcome at last, if the mind becomes inured to the medium it works in, is mental disorganization and spiritual confusion. I remember many years ago hearing a Presbyterian evangelist, who had once been a professional spiritualist, discourse on the experiences of his unreformed days. Most of the supernatural phenomena he denounced as pure imposture; but with great earnestness he declared that there was a residue of mystery which the mediums themselves could not explain, and he warned his hearers to keep their eyes and ears from meddling with what was manifestly the direct work of the devil. Well, let us cry peace to the devil. That august personage is probably too busily engaged in graver pursuits to be diverted to the amusements of the séance. But if mythology is to be called in, let us ask rather in wonder why a scholar such as Frederic Myers, who had drunk so deep of the well of Hippocrene, should have turned his attention from Apollo to the Poltergeist? Not here, in the close atmosphere of trance and convulsion—

“Not here, O Apollo!  
Are haunts meet for thee;  
But where Helicon breaks down  
In cliff to the sea.”



How then, we ask, has a scholar like Myers or an experienced man of the world like Mr. Holt brought himself to seek comfort in looking at what one of them at least does not hesitate to call "a photograph of chaos and old night"? I suspect it is largely through the glamour of a word, the much-repeating of the mystic syllables of "science." The specious analogy with evolution has a power, like charity, to cover the evils of many an inconsistency; and it is probable also that the grandiose achievements of science in the sphere of material motion and change have confirmed the revolt from everything in religion that bears a true or fancied resemblance to quietism. It is, in fact, perilously easy to infer from a philosophy of natural selection that repose and stability are the marks of death and that life and growth are the product of purposeless activity. Hence, in part, the widespread tendency to honor the tumult rather than the strength of the soul; and hence, perhaps, the readiness of men of great intellectual ability to put the Poltergeist in the place of the old-fashioned God of Providence, whose commands were in the form of prohibitions. It is a strange obsession, a stranger faith! If there is any divinity to be learned from these conclusions of pseudo-science, it should seem to be the admonition to close the ears of the spirit to those random calls, whencesoever they come, and to listen once more for the still small voice, that was heard thousands of years ago and is the same today as yesterday. The whisper of the Cosmic Soul so heard may be only our own soul speaking in the silences of the flesh—I am not concerned to explain these things—but its message is clear and certain. "God," it says, as the great philosopher declared, "is a being simple and true both in act and in word; neither doth He Himself suffer change nor doth He deceive others by fantasies or messages or by the sending of signs whether to the waking or to the sleeping." This is the

same voice that proclaims the hope of immortality in the presence of that within us which amid birth and decay knows itself independent of these and a partaker of the divine nature; that announces the final grace of happiness in a peace that passes understanding; and speaks in the life of Socrates and Jesus and ten thousand other witnesses—but if there, then not in the words of Spencer or William James. Why, if a man needs the consolations of religion, should he seek further than that? Why, if he believes that a verbal revelation is possible, should he discard the sacred books of mankind for the fumbling reports of the Society for Psychical Research? And why, in the name of conscience, why, if a living medium is demanded, is it more reasonable to suppose that the mystery of life speaks through Mrs. Piper than through the Bishop of Rome?

And so, “having laid hands on father Parmenides,” I recoil at my own temerity. The truth is, in whatever spirit you may take up this book on the *Cosmic Relations*, its arguments will impose themselves on you in one way or another by the sheer weight of the personality behind them. At least I am sure that, in the very act of criticising, ignorantly perhaps, its avowedly tentative explanations of psychic phenomena and the Cosmic Soul, I have felt myself fortified in my position by a something within it that is not tentative at all, but spoken with the authority of certain experience. There are pages here that any attentive reader will mark for their pungent expression of knowledge accumulated from many phases of life; for the privileged few there are passages of intimate, almost sacred self-revelation; and then there are other pages for the world in which the S. P. R. is forgotten and the author speaks of immortality and the reasonableness of faith in a way that must arrest the mind of the sceptical materialist and bring courage to the timid believer. If, as I am bound to think, much of the specific theory

of the book is drawn from the false usurpations of science, the real motive power behind the arguments is a well-fortified assurance of those greater and less troubled things for which we used to look in places and minds withdrawn from the world. Not many things of recent years are of more significance than that deep intuitions of religion should reach us unmistakably from this source and in the manner of this book.